



Dear Environmental Commission Chair,

July 19, 2019

The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) is a statewide organization that for 50 years has been supporting environmental commissions, local boards, and public officials advocating for strong local, state, and regional environmental policy. Most recently, we have been working with both local officials and the state legislature to educate them on the importance of reducing single-use bags and polystyrene.

It has come to our attention that you may have received a letter from Linda Doherty, President and CEO of New Jersey Food Council, regarding the statewide legislative initiative to phase out the use of single-use plastic bags, paper bags, and polystyrene. We would like to take this time to clarify some of the misconceptions in this letter.

Municipalities that put forth a single-use plastic, paper, or polystyrene reduction ordinance receive the benefit of less pollution and litter, while encouraging sustainable behavior. Right now, there are over 50 local ordinances reducing single-use plastic or polystyrene throughout the state, with many more municipalities considering similar regulations. This local action is so critical to New Jersey as we begin to change consumer behavior and phase out single-use bags.

Contrary to what critics say, almost all ordinances, and the statewide legislation, offer exemptions for single-use plastic for food safety reasons. This can include meat, fish, and poultry, and in the legislation businesses are allowed to use small produce bags to prevent meat and other food items from contaminating another item.

Also, ending our dependence on polystyrene, also known as Styrofoam, is essential to the health of New Jersey's residents and environment. It takes more than half a millennium for a Styrofoam cup to break down, and it carries toxins that move up the food chain to endanger human health. There are several thriving businesses that have already phased out polystyrene and have come up with sustainable alternatives.

While ANJEC supports the statewide legislation, at the same time we support local action. The two are not mutually exclusive. There is no time to waste in reducing our plastic and polystyrene usage, and these regulations are what push the state to act. Lawmakers are encouraged by municipalities protecting their natural resources and reducing litter.

We hope you will continue to fight against plastic and polystyrene pollution and will consider regulations to do so in your own municipality. This momentum will only help New Jersey move forward as we work to achieve a responsible and sustainable future for New Jersey's families and businesses.

We are more than happy to assist you with model ordinances, training sessions, and other resources to help reduce plastic usage if you are interested in moving forward with an ordinance. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions at (973) 539-7574 or jcoffey@anjec.org. Thank you for considering reducing plastic in your municipality as we work toward a plastic-free future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer M. Coffey'.

Jennifer M. Coffey
Executive Director